PRE-SYNOPSIS OF THE PROPOSED DOCTORAL RESEARCH WORK

ON

A Study of Existential Notions of Freedom in Select Non-fictions of Simone de Beauvoir

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Project Title:

A Study of Existential Notions of Freedom in Select Non-fiction of Simone de Beauvoir

Introduction:

Existentialism focuses on personal choice and the question: What does it mean to exist? Existentialist philosophy encompasses a range of perspectives, but it shares certain underlying concepts. Among these, a central tenet of existentialism is that personal freedom, individual responsibility and deliberate choice are essential to the pursuit of self-discovery and the determination of life's meaning. Existentialist theory is rooted in the philosophical idea that humans have free choice so that we can create purpose and meaning in our lives. It suggests that we have a choice in who we desire to be. The core characteristic of the existential view is that an individual is a 'being in the world' who has biological, social, and psychological needs. Being in the world involves the physical world, the world of relationships with others and one's own relationship with oneself.

The roots of existential theory date back to the early 1800s. The first philosopher to explore the idea of existentialism was Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard. He is often known as the father of existentialism. Other key influences on existentialist theory include: Freidrich Nietzsche, Dr. Karl Jaspers, Dr. Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Dr. Viktor Frankl, Dr. Irvin Yalom and Simone de Beauvoir**.** Beauvoir contributed to existentialist thought by focusing on themes of freedom, ambiguity, feminism, individual choice and responsibility and so on. Simone de Beauvoir (9 January 1908 – 14 April 1986) was a French writer, feminist, social theorist, existential philosopher and activist. She wrote novels, biographies, autobiographies, essays and monographs on philosophy, politics and social issues. Her famous novels include *She Came to*

*stay (*1943) and *The Mandarins* (1954). Her most enduring contribution to literature are her memoirs, which have warmth and descriptive power. She is best known for her groundbreaking ideas surrounding feminism. Her book *The Second Sex* (1949) is said to mark the beginning of second wave feminism across the globe. It was published in two volumes: Facts and Myths, and Lived Experience.

She was highly awarded. Some of the most notable prizes are:

- The 1954 Prix Goncourt,
- The 1975 Jerusalem Prize,
- The 1978 Austrian State Prize for European Literature.
- She was also nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1961, 1969, and 1973.

In the present study the researcher has selected Simone de Beauvoir's three nonfiction writings to analyze them with the existential notions of freedom. The selected texts are *The Second Sex, The Ethics of Ambiguity,* and *The Coming of Age.*

Statement of Problem:

"A Study of Existential Notions of Freedom in Select Non-fiction of Simone de Beauvoir: *The Ethics of Ambiguity, The Second Sex* and *The Coming of Age".*

Objectives of the Study:

The aims and objectives of the synopsis concentrate on the three non-fictional writings of Simone de Beauvoir. The selected nonfictions focus on various phages and roles of human life and explore the importance of freedom in search of self-invention and satisfaction**.** They are as follows:

- to study various notions of freedom through ethics of ambiguity
- to analyze notions of freedom with women's life through feminist lenses
- to evaluate notion of freedom with reference to the old age
- to study ideas related to existentialism

Review of Related Literature:

Simone de Beauvoir**,** in her book, *What is Existentialism?,* uses the characters of Pyrrhus and Cineas to take readers through the main idea of existentialism and touches upon how these ideas relate to God, the rest of humanity and one's own experience of living. In a way, the book carries forward from Sartre's introduction to existentialism, that is, "Man is condemned to be free", De Beauvoir then asks, "And what after that?" It can be summarized that human existence precedes essence; human beings are condemned to be free and faced with difficult choices in life. All these choices are contextual and change with changing time. No choice is good for eternity that it makes sense only in here and now.

Badak, Reter's research *Understanding of Self with Special Reference to the Second Sex of Simone de Beauvoir'* exhibits Simone de Beauvoir's notion of self in *The Second Sex.* The term self is synonymously used with the idea of subjectivity by de Beauvoir. That is, a self-conscious transcendent subject who recognizes freedom at the very center of life and the responsibility freedom entails.

Sumukhi G.P., in his research *The Concept of Freedom and Authenticity in Existentialism- A study in Sartre* (2004), studies Sartre's concept of freedom and it's relevance with authenticity. Sartre says, Existentialism is nothing else than an attempt to draw all the consequences of a coherent atheistic position. He states that God does not exist. So there is at

least one being in whom ‘existence precedes essence’ means that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world and defines himself afterwards. In the chapter on the concept of authenticity, the author states that authenticity means creating our own comprehensive life meanings. When one re-centers and re-integrates one’s life around freely-chosen purposes, he or she becomes more focused, unified and decisive. The one resists enculturation and gains great autonomy.

Mehata, Vipasa, in their research *Self a Study Through Some Concepts of Idealist Existentialist and Marxist Philosophy (2003),* discuss modern idealism, essence, existence, historical materialism and their correlation with each other. The researcher tries to understand the meaning of 'self’ with the help of self-retrieval, choice and production.

Mohammad Abdurahiman, in his research *Existentialist and Other Philosophical Aspects in the works of Anis Mansur,* studies various aspects and ideas of existentialism with reference to Anis Mansur’s writings.

These reviews of literature have proved to be helpful to decide the objectives and formulate the hypothesis for the study. Reviews have provided the researcher with a complete idea of existentialism and the steps for the research.

Scope and limitations:

The proposed research is an attempt to study thoroughly the selected works of Simone de Beauvoir. All her non-fiction encompasses the quest for identity, self-realization, freedom, women’s empowerment and existentialist ideas. The study will confine itself to the selected nonfiction only. It will not consider other non-fictional and fictional works of Simone de

Beauvoir. The scope of the research will be to study the varied notions of freedom through existentialist perspective.

Hypothesis:

The present research focuses on the following hypothesis:

1. Humans always try to add meaning to their existence with the help of freedom.
2. People make choices based on their experiences, beliefs and outlooks.
3. The ethics of ambiguity also play an important role in the process of making life meaningful with the help of freedom.
4. Women's lives and freedom are affected by the patriarchal culture and the gender bias.
5. Freedom is also affected by age. As a child, the freedom is conditioned by elder and in old age it is affected by health, gender, politics, economic independence and so on.

Research Methodology:

The present research proposal is an analytical and qualitative study. It uses the textual-descriptive method of analysis. It examines the primary translated text that includes *The Ethics of Ambiguity (1947), The Second Sex (1949)* and *The Coming of Age (1970).* The research focuses upon the existentialist ideas expressed in the selected non-fiction that affect individual self-identity and self-realization.

Data Collection:

The data for the study is collected from primary and secondary sources. The data is comparatively analyzed. Data collection by using original text by Simone de Beauvoir and their translated version into English is divided into two categories:

A. **Primary data: Original texts of selected non-fictions. They are as below:**

1. *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947), 2.*The Second Sex* (1949),& 3.*The Coming of Age* (1970).

B. **Secondary Data:** It contains following English translations and editions:

1. Beauvoir, S. d. (1949). *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (first Ed.). (B. Frechtman, Trans.) Citadel Press.
2. Beauvoir,S.d. (2018). *The Ethic of Ambiguity*. Maryland Us:Open Road Integrated Media
3. Beauvoir, S. d. (1952). *The Second Sex*. (H. Parshley, Trans.) New York: Knopf.
4. Beauvoir, S. d. (2015). *The Second Sex.* (C. B. Malovany-Chevallier, Trans.) London: Vintage Books.
5. Beauvoir, S. d. (1972). *The Coming of Age*. (A. D. Nicolson, Trans.) London Great Britain: Andre Deutsch and George Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd.
6. Beauvoir, S. d. (1996). *The Coming of Age* (reprint ed.). (P. O'Brian, Trans.) Nortan.

Besides that the study comprises updated English editions of translation, critical writings, reference books, research papers, articles published in National and International Journals, previous researches on Shodhgangotri, Shodhganga and other E-resources.

Significance of the Research:

The present study would be an example for the in-depth study of Beauvoir's selected non-fictions from the viewpoint of the existential notion of freedom. *The Ethics of Ambiguity* is existential approach to ethics, published in 1947. It builds upon the existentialist notion that "existence precedes essence", and is characterized by the idea that meaning is not inherent in the world but is created by individuals through their actions.

Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is considered as the "Bible" of feminist studies and develops several existentialist ideas. Simone de Beauvoir analyses woman's life with various perspective and suggests possible solution to women's emancipation. Beauvoir writes about 'the metaphysical risk of freedom that must invent it's goals without help', 'the temptation to flee

freedom and to make himself into a thing' and 'the anguish and stress of authentically assumed existence'. She agrees with Sartre that freedom is a heavy responsibility and claims that it is a characteristic of the female condition to avoid risk that the exercise of freedom involves.

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Coming of Age* published in 1970, is a philosophical work that explores that experience of aging and the meaning of growing old. The book examines the social, cultural and personal dimensions of aging and the ways in which ageism and sexism intersect to create unique challenges for older woman. Old age, for Simone de Beauvoir, is not shameful or frightening but should be celebrated as an opportunity to be authentic. She urges the readers to face up to ageing with honesty and bravery.

Overall the researcher studies the three different themes as freedom for a common human being, for woman and in old age ideas with existential perspective. Therefore, it will help the new researchers and students to understand Simone de Beauvoir's variety of existential views. Academically, the research would engage and be of greater benefit to the concerned in the field and studies related to existential notions of freedom.

Tentative Chapter Scheme:

The tentative chapter scheme is as follows:

Chapter I: Introduction

Chapter II: *The Ethics of Ambiguity*: Navigating Existence

Chapter III: *The Second Sex*: Quest for Existence

Chapter IV: *The Coming of Age:* Perspectives of Existence

Chapter V: Conclusion

Chapter One: Introduction

It includes basic information about the concept of human existence and the natural quest for self-identity, adding value and meaning to life with reference to existentialist theory. In addition to that, it includes an analytical study and definition of non-fiction with a brief history. It concludes the biography of Simone de Beauvoir and her existential approach in the selected non-fictions: *The Ethics of Ambiguity, The Second Sex* and *The Coming of Age.*

Chapter Two: *The Ethics of Ambiguity*: Navigating Existence

Beauvoir wrote her first philosophical essay, *Pyrrhus et Cineas 1944 (Pyrrhus and Cineas)* is a discussion on existentialist ethics. She continued her exploration of existentialism through her second essay, *The Ethics of Ambiguity (1947).* It is perhaps the most accessible entry into French Existentialism. In the essay, Beauvoir clears up some inconsistencies that many have found in major existentialist works such as Sartre's *Being Nothingness.* In *The Ethics of Ambiguity,* Beauvoir confronts the existentialist dilemma of absolute freedom verses the constraints of circumstance. She stresses the ambiguity of the human condition, suggesting that the relationship between self and other, like the relationship between the material and the transcendent aspects of our being, is one of reciprocity. "To will oneself free is also to will others free". This gives rise to the possibility of moral obligation and also moral freedom. She concludes that since the individual is defined by his relationship to the world and to the other individuals; a human being exists only by transcending oneself and the freedom for self can be achieved only through the freedom of others". Meaning and the world are both disclosed through humans so full freedom even in our own activity can only be preserved in our free actions when we work to advance and preserve the freedom of others: otherwise we can not disclose freedom to ourselves.

Chapter Three: *The Second Sex*: Quest for Existence

Beauvoir's *The Second Sex (1949*) is primarily known as a feminist text. It is Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist philosophy that influenced Beauvoir's writings. *The Second Sex* always maintains its fundamental existentialist belief that each individual should be encouraged to define himself or herself and to take on individual responsibility that comes with freedom. The work is divided into two major themes. The first book investigates the "facts and myths" about woman from multiple perspectives including biological-scientific, social, psychoanalytic, materialistic, historical, literary, economic, political and anthropological. In each of these treatments, Beauvoir is careful to claim that none of them is sufficient to explain a woman's definition as man's 'Other' and her consequent oppression.

Chapter Four: *The Coming of Age:* Perspectives of Existence

The Coming of Age (1970) is a book in which the author Beauvoir seeks a greater understanding of the perception of elders. The book has been separated into two parts. The first half is a look from the outside in at how society and its citizens view old age, ranging from how families treat their elders to the views of old age by the philosophers and literary giants throughout the years. She breaks down the influences by particular philosophers and shows how these influences settled on the human psyche and are imbedded in the 70's society.

The second part of the book is a look from the inside out. Life through the eyes of a senior citizen ranges from poor to wealthy as well as famous to unknown. Beauvoir examines the myths and realities of life as an old person in the developed world and presents proof that despite societies' expectations, the elderly still feel the same passion as their younger counterparts.

De Beauvoir addresses and challenges societies' marginalization and neglect of its senior citizen population critically. She challenges the reader to change their future.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Beauvoir's selected non-fiction explore various ideas of existentialism, those help the readers to understand and discover their life the way they want to live. In *The Ethics of Ambiguity,* she asserts that a person is fundamentally free to make choices, a freedom that comes from own 'nothingness' which is an essential aspect of one's ability to be self-aware and to be conscious of oneself. Through personal freedom and others', she examines a number of different ways that people try to deny their freedom, as freedom can be uncomfortable and disquieting. The freedom to choose entails the freedom to try to avoid one's freedom. The positive aspect of ambiguity Beauvoir examines the intricacies and nuances of genuinely free action in the world. In brief, we are absolutely free today if we choose to will our existence in its finiteness, a finiteness that is open to the infinite.

Through *The Second Sex* she examines that women's failure to take responsibility for their freedom is seen as bad faith and as the trap of patriarchal society. In patriarchal society, women are led to believe that they are happier rejecting their freedom than they would be taking responsibility for it. In *The Coming of Age,* she explains that how the age factor affects the freedom of an individual. Overall, the research is an in-depth analysis of our life, self, freedom, responsibility, personal choices, and ambiguity. The in-depth analysis of this study make the readers and researchers aware about how a human life revolves since the birth to till the death and each and every stage of life make us grow towards authenticity. Human being take and choose their pass on their own analysis of life and surroundings, but if the intentions are for better world then everything gets easier and meaningful, 'the meaning existence'.

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